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ABSTRACT

As part of a period of self-study, representatives of the University of Texas at Austin (UTA) Committee on Graduate Reading contacted 26 leaders in the field of reading. These leaders were asked to rank the top ten graduate reading programs in the U.S. and Canada, to place UTA in relation to the top ten, and to comment on the placement of UTA. Responses from 19 individuals were tabulated and discussed. The limitations of such questionnaire reports are also considered. (AA)

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EXTERNAL EVALUATION TO IMPROVE LOCAL GRADUATE READING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Thomas D. Horn

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As part of a period of self study in terms of external evaluation during the 1976-77 academic year, representatives of The University of Texas at Austin (UTA) Committee on Graduate Reading contacted twenty-six leaders in the field of reading, representing twenty-three different U.S. and two Canadian institutions, for responses to a very brief questionnaire. These individuals were asked to respond to the following: (1) Excluding your own institution, which graduate reading programs would you place in the top ten in the United States and Canada? Please order your selections if possible. (2) Where would you place the graduate reading program at The University of Texas at Austin relative to your top ten identified above? and (3) Comments concerning your placement of The University of Texas at Austin.

Descriptions of the currently active graduate reading programs were included with the questionnaire and the eleven regular faculty members participating in the UTA reading program were identified as representing the following ten institutions: Berkeley, Chicago, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Wisconsin. An additional twelve to fifteen doctoral and graduate students plus some undergraduates on the reading specialist program assist in instructional activities or in the reading materials laboratory. Space allocations of 11,700 square feet are provided in the new Education Building for the Learning Disabilities Center (LDC) and the Reading Materials Laboratory.

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Since approximately 50% of both the graduate and undergraduate programs involved practicum experiences, "on-site" instructional space is provided

by the Austin Independent School District in five or six elementary schools each semester of the academic year. Since not all of these schools are open in the summer, graduate and undergraduate practicum experiences are provided by the LDC. During the 1976 summer session, over 200 children constituted the basis of the practicum experiences for on-campus reading instruction.

Of the nineteen individuals responding:

4 declined to identify the top ten graduate programs, one of whom ranked UTA 4th or 5th (tabulated as 5th); one indicated faith in UTA staff quality, but lacked solid facts for an unequivocal response.

3 identified the top ten programs, but declined to rank order them, two of whom mentioned UTA in the top ten; and one declined to rank UTA on the basis of being unfamiliar with the program per se.

12 identified and ranked (several indicated that their rankings were suspect) the top ten graduate programs in reading (excluding their own institution), and ranked UTA as follows:

5 top five

4 6-10

3 below top ten, one of whom said, "Somewhat below in terms of visibility -- have seen some good products." A second said, "Probably among the next five."

A total of thirty-six institutions were identified by the respondents. Table 1 indicates those institutions which were mentioned as having graduate reading programs in the top ten on the basis of number of mentions are thus identified and ordered: Georgia; Syracuse and UTA; Indiana and Wisconsin; Minnesota; Berkeley and Arizona; and Temple and Alberta.

Table 1

INSTITUTIONS MENTIONED MOST TIMES IN TOP TEN

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Number of Mentions</u>
Georgia	13
Syracuse	12
UT Austin	12
Indiana	10
Wisconsin	10
Minnesota	9
Berkeley	7
Arizona	7
Temple	6
Alberta	6
Ohio State U.	5
Buffalo	4
Hofstra	4
Arizona State U.	3
Maryland	3
Boston	3
Pittsburgh	3
Illinois	2
British Columbia	2
Missouri	2
Miami	2
Delaware	2

Table 2 indicates those institutions mentioned the most times as being in the top five graduate reading programs. The top five according to the most mentions are therefore identified and ordered as: Georgia; Syracuse; Indiana, Minnesota and UTA. Of these, only UTA failed to receive at least one ranking of either 1 or 2. The next ranked programs, Wisconsin and Alberta, both received rankings of 1 and/or 2.

Table 3 identifies those institutions mentioned once only, with their rank, if indicated by the respondent.

Table 4 reflects the ranking tabulation for all institutions mentioned in the various responses. By way of explanation of the "not mentioned" column, UTA was not mentioned by only one respondent, most probably because it was the institution requesting information. In the case of the University of Georgia, if one of the respondents represented that institution and excluded (as directed) his or her own in the program identification ranking, only one other respondent did not mention the Georgia program; in the case of Syracuse, if one of the respondents represented that institution, he or she would exclude Syracuse from the rankings, hence two respondents did not mention the Syracuse program. A similar analysis may be made for the other institutions in Table 4 which were not mentioned by two or more respondents.

In the "below top ten" category, UTA was the only institution showing a tabulation since this was specifically requested in the questionnaire; for the rest of the programs, the tabulations in the "not mentioned" column will be of interest.

To summarize briefly, UTA: (1) tied (with Syracuse) for second behind Georgia for the number of mentions in the top ten; (2) ranked

Table 2

INSTITUTIONS MENTIONED MOST TIMES IN TOP FIVE

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Number of Mentions</u>
Georgia	8
Syracuse.	7
Indiana	6
Minnesota	6
UT Austin	6
Wisconsin	4
Alberta	3
Berkeley.	2
Temple	2
Ohio State U.	2
Illinois.	2
Boston	2
Arizona	1
Buffalo SUNY	1
Arizona State U.	1
Pittsburgh	1
British Columbia	1

Table 3

INSTITUTIONS MENTIONED ONCE ONLY

<u>Institution</u>	<u>Ranking of 1-10</u>
OTSE Toronto	# 1
U.S.C.	# 1
Northern Colorado	# 2
Albany SUNY	# 4
Harvard.	# 4
Missouri -- Kansas City	# 5
Michigan State U.	# 7
Florida.	# 10
South Florida.	Top 10 but not ranked
Atlanta.	" " " " "
U of Illinois -- N.E. (sic).	" " " " "
McGill	" " " " "

Table 4

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Top Ten but not ranked	Below Top Ten	Not Men- tioned
* UT Austin			2	1	2	2	1	1			3	3	1
Georgia	1	1	2		4			2			3		2
Syracuse	3		2	1	1	1		1			3		3
Indiana	1	3	2								4		5
Wisconsin	1	2		1			1		1	1	3		5
Minnesota		1	2	1	2	1					2		6
Berkeley	1		1				1	1		1	2		8
Arizona				1			1	1		2	2		8
Temple	1	1				1	2				1		9
Alberta		2		1						1	2		9
Ohio State U.	1	1							2		1		10
Buffalo SUNY				1			2				2		10
Indiana								1	1	1	1		11
Arizona State U.				1				1	1				12
Boston U.	1				1					1			12
Pittsburgh					1	1					1		12
Maryland							1		2				12
Illinois				2									13
British Columbia			1			1							13
Missouri						1					1		13
Delaware						1					1		13
Miami										1	1		13
N.Y.U.									1				14
Albany SUNY				1									14
U.T. Toronto	1												14
Harvard				1									14
Northern Colorado		1											14
Florida										1			14
South Florida											1		14
U.S.C.	1												14
Missouri -- Kansas City					1								14
Michigan State U.							1						14
Atlanta													14
U. of Illinois -- N.E. (sic)													14
Illini													14

* UTA has 16 responses due to a respondent who declined to identify top ten but ranked UTA 4 or 5. Deletion of this response from the tabulation does not affect the identification of top five and ten.

with Indiana and Minnesota behind Georgia and Syracuse in the times mentioned in the top five; and (3) did not receive any rankings higher than 3.

Different results would undoubtedly be derived from a different sample of reading educators; however, the individuals contacted are as knowledgeable in the reading field as most anyone in the United States and Canada. The extent of positive bias toward the UTA program merely because of UTA being the inquiring institution is unknown. Also, little confidence can be placed in the significance of the difference between, say, Institution A being mentioned in the top ten seven times and Institution B being mentioned six times. Because the purpose of the survey was to further improve the UTA reading program, the rankings are of most value as a general context against which to assess the quality of the UTA program.

Comments on the returns reiterate the quandry evaluators face as to the critical factors on which an evaluation should be based. Such factors include: (1) people -- what is known of the staff quality and support personnel of the program; (2) program -- what hard data are available as to program structure, theoretically and actually, and the amount and quality of space allocated to support the program; and by (3) product -- what is known of the quality evidenced by graduates of the program.

Most of us are aware of the fact that questionnaire studies have faults and that on-site evaluations are necessary to substantiate or modify the questionnaire results. The first on-site external evaluator spent two days at UTA in July, 1976 for this purpose. In the meantime as the rental car advertisement goes, "When you're No. 2....."

Appendix

Comments Concerning Placement
of UTA Graduate Reading Program

Rank

Comments

3

Good balance among elementary, secondary, and related work, etc.
Excellent staff
Articulated program
Caliber of graduate students -- I mean graduates
Clinic facility
Public school orientation

3

A lot of the Texas personnel are still rather young, so Texas at Austin should become even more outstanding as these people mature and gain in national recognition.

4

Aside from the five institutions listed above, I do not think there are five other outstanding institutions. The majority of graduate reading programs are not particularly impressive.

5

Texas has a strong, diversified faculty. It also provides excellent opportunities for interdisciplinary study on the part of graduate students, because of the power of related departments in the University.

5

It is difficult to place a program judging by course titles. It is the quality of the instruction that makes the difference. At Texas I am judging largely by Professor _____. I know him well and have only the highest regard for his ability and devotion. I know that he would surround himself only with able people.

5

I would not care to try to rank order the top ten graduate reading programs. I can say that I would place Texas somewhere in the top ten -- probably about the middle of the top ten, i.e. rank of 4 or 5.

6

No comments.

6

I know the program listed above of 1, 2, 3, 5 and 10 quite well, the others less well. Your program at Texas seems quite complete but I really know little about it.

7

is in a top quality institution but tends to have a regional influence.

Appendix (cont'd)

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Comments</u>
8	The weakness of Texas's graduate reading program is that it is not sufficiently tied to theoretical and experimental work in cognitive psychology and other fields. Texas's strength is that it has a very strong curriculum and instruction <u>and</u> school emphasis. I wouldn't want Texas to change directions 180°, but a 20-40° deflection would help. There are some very knowledgeable people over in your psychology department and your linguistics department.
Top ten but not ranked.	Content appropriate as indicated in the enclosure except for the Clinical/Remedial, which appears to need more breadth in developmental areas and expansion of the remedial practicum.
Top ten but not ranked.	Good staff, meaningful research
Below top ten.	Somewhat below in terms of visibility -- though I've seen some good products.
Next five (11-15)	You have several excellent faculty members. The faculty is a little smaller than at some other institutions and probably cannot offer doctoral courses in equal variety and depth. Your school has a fine reputation, however.
Below top ten.	A program is judged largely on the basis of graduates of that program and the people on the faculty. I don't know any doctoral graduates of the Texas program. I know three of the Texas faculty members; two of these are well known. Offerings in reading are limited. (Data on faculty came from recent IRA publication.)
Not mentioned.	No comments.